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AUTHOR Larson, Sheryl A.; Lakin, K. Charlie
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ABSTRACT

This review of the literature focuses on the effects of deinstitutionalization (moving from state institutions to community living arrangements) on the adaptive behavior of persons with mental retardation. The selection process for the 18 studies receiving in-depth review is detailed. Two tables detail changes in three categories of behavior for study subjects: (1) overall adaptive behavior score; (2) change in one or more of seven specific types of adaptive behavior; and (3) change in problem behavior. The study found that all eight experimental/contrast group studies reported statistically significant greater achievement in either overall adaptive behavior or in the basic self-care/domestic skill domain for those who moved to community arrangements. None of the experimental/contrast group studies, however, reported statistically significant differences between groups for changes in problem behaviors. Most longitudinal studies reported statistically significant or slightly positive increases in overall adaptive behavior or in basic self-care skills. Overall, 13 of the 18 studies noted statistically significant improvements in either overall adaptive behavior or basic self-care/domestic skills, with 17 of the 18 studies showing at least a tendency toward improved adaptive behavior associated with community placement. No consistent pattern of change was demonstrated in the 10 studies reporting changes in problem behavior. (20 references) (DB)

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Policy Research Brief

A summary of research on policy issues affecting persons with developmental disabilities.

March 1989 **Vol. 1, No. 1 (rev.)**

Deinstitutionalization of Persons with Mental Retardation: The Impact on Daily Living Skills

Nationally, the policy of deinstitutionalization of persons with mental retardation has been pursued for 20 years. In fiscal year 1967, state institutions for persons with mental retardation had an average daily population of 194,650; by fiscal year 1987, the average daily populations of the same institutions had decreased by 100,000 persons to 94,696 (White, Lakin, Hill, Wright & Bruininks, 1988). Much of the early momentum for deinstitutionalization was drawn from recurring evidence of very poor, often deplorable, conditions in state institutions, including unsafe and unsanitary conditions, overcrowding, regimentation, and progressive debilitation of residents. Since then, much has been done to improve these conditions. Perhaps the most important effort toward improvement was the enactment of the Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICF-MR) program in 1971, which established specific standards for institutional care in return for federal participation in at least half the costs of care. Today the ICF-MR program certifies 93% of all state institution "beds" (Lakin, Hill, White & Wright, in press). Court cases in the majority of states also have required significant improvements in the conditions of one or more state institutions. Related to the above, as well as to the general commitment on the part of states to improve institutional care, per resident expenditures in 1987 ($54,500) were five times greater in real dollars than per resident expenditures in 1967 (White et al., 1988).

In response to policy deliberations at the federal and state levels that would continue the depopulation of state institutions, including in many instances closure of entire institutions, advocates of maintaining institutional services are suggesting that today's institutional care may be as effective or more effective than community-based care. This review of literature responds to that issue with respect to a single, but important, area: the changes in adaptive behavior (the basic skills of daily living) of individuals moving from state institutions to community living arrangements. It does so by reviewing all published and unpublished literature meeting standards for quality and identifiability.

Research Selection

Research screened for inclusion in this summary was identified from the following sources: 1) a computer search of the Psychological Abstracts from 1976 to 1988; 2) a computer search of the ERIC research data base from 1976 to 1988; 3) manual review of major journals in mental retardation from 1980 to 1988; 4) review of Dissertation Abstracts from 1980 to 1988; and 5) requests to all state mental retardation agencies for studies of behavioral change for persons living in different kinds of residential facilities. Over 50 studies were identified and screened according to the following criteria for inclusion in this review: 1) followed 6 or more individuals from public institution placements through at least 6 months of living in a community facility, with community facility defined as having 15 or fewer residents and located off the grounds of a large facility; 2) collected baseline data while persons were still in the institutions; 3) measured overall adaptive behavior and/or specific types of adaptive behavior (e.g., self-care/domestic skills, communication skills, social skills) in the same manner and with the same instruments in both settings; 4) reported basic demographic and diagnostic information on institution and community facility subjects; and 5) discharged community-based facility subjects from institutions in or after 1975. The 18 studies meeting these criteria were included in this review of adaptive behavior outcomes. In addition, where any of the studies of changes in adaptive behavior also examined changes in problem behavior, those results were also summarized.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 (see pages 3-4) show the changes in three categories of behavior of individuals with mental retardation as they moved from large state institutions to small community living arrangements. The first category was change in overall adaptive behavior score. The second category was change in one or more of seven specific types

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of adaptive behavior. These results were summarized according to the types that most closely matched the categories reported in each study. The third category was change in problem behavior associated with a move to a community living arrangement.

Outcomes were reported in terms of the direction of change with the public institution as the point of reference. That is, a positive outcome (+) means adaptive behavior was greater in the community, or that problem behavior was less evident. A negative outcome (-) means the adaptive behavior was lower in the community, or that problem behavior was more evident. Two pluses (++) or minuses (--) are used when the magnitude of difference indicates a probability of less than 5% that the result occurred because of random error (statistically significant). One plus (+) or minus (-) indicates that a difference was found between the groups, but that there was more than a 5% chance that the result was due to random error, or that the differences were not tested for statistical significance. A zero (o) indicates that no difference was found or that statistically insignificant findings were reported in a manner not permitting evaluation of the general tendency. Blanks indicate the topic was not studied or that no data were reported.

Table 1 shows the outcomes reported for studies that used an experimental/contrast group format. Those studies compared the changes in adaptive behavior (and in some instances, problem behavior) for persons who moved to the community with changes for persons of similar characteristics who remained in state institutions. Some of the studies involved random selection of subjects for either the experimental (community living) or the contrast (continued institutionalization) group. Other studies matched individuals who moved and individuals who stayed on characteristics such as sex, age, measured intellectual level, and initial level of adaptive behavior. The adaptive and problem behaviors of each group were measured both before and after the move. Table 1 summarizes the differences between groups in changes in adaptive and problem behavior after the experimental group moved to community settings.

Table 2 shows the outcomes reported in studies utilizing a longitudinal approach to measuring changes in adaptive behavior (and, in some instances problem behavior). These studies measured behavior before or at the time of deinstitutionalization and then at various times after the move. Some studies measured change once after the move while others measured change repeatedly. The results summarized on Table 2 reflect overall changes in adaptive behavior after movement to community settings.

Discussion

All eight experimental/contrast group studies reported statistically significant greater achievement in either overall adaptive behavior or in the basic self-care/domestic skill domain for those who moved to community living arrangements relative to those who remained in state institutions. There were statistically significant changes favoring community over institutional settings in numerous other adaptive behavior areas as well. None of the experimental/contrast group studies, however, reported statistically significant differences between groups for changes in problem behaviors.

Among the longitudinal studies, 5 of the 10 reported statistically significant increases in overall adaptive behavior or in the basic self-care/domestic skill area after movement to the community. A sixth study would have most probably shown statistically significant changes, but no statistical tests were employed and the reported data did not permit such testing at this point. Three other studies in this area showed positive behavior changes after movement to a community residence, but the magnitude of the changes was not statistically significant. A number of statistically significant improvements were noted in specific types of adaptive behavior. There was considerable variation in the reported changes in problem behavior in this set of studies.

Overall, 13 of the 18 studies summarized for this report noted statistically significant improvements in either overall adaptive behavior or in the basic self-care/domestic skill area. Seventeen of 18 studies showed at least a tendency toward improved adaptive behavior associated with movement to the community. Conversely, in only one was any negative change in any area of adaptive behavior associated with community placement. In that study (Kleinburg & Galligan, 1983) a small (statistically insignificant) decrease was noted in the domains "vocational behavior" and "recreation/leisure". Therefore, one must conclude that available research provides considerable support for the assertion that people who move from state institutions to small community living arrangements can be expected to experience increases in adaptive behavior skills. On the other hand, for the ten studies that reported changes in problem behavior, no consistent pattern of change was demonstrated related to movement from institutional to community settings. While again it is noted that this summary only examined changes in problem behavior that were included in studies focusing on adaptive behavior, these studies do not support the assertion that people who move from state institutions to small community living arrangements can be expected to experience reductions in problem behaviors solely as a function of moving.

Table 1
Experimental/Contrast Group Studies
Behavioral Outcomes Associated with Movement from State Institutions to Small (15 or fewer persons) Community Living Arrangements

Author (date)	State	# Subjects Exp.	# Subjects Cont.	Age	Time (months)	Level of MR: Bord/Mild	Level of MR: Mod	Level of MR: Sev	Level of MR: Prof	BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES: Adaptive Behavior: General/Overall	BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES: Adaptive Behavior: Specific Domains	BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES: Problem Behavior
Bradley et al. (1986)	NH	80	80	AC	72	X	X	X	X	++	o,d	-
Close (1977)	OR	6	6	A	12			X	X		++ a	
Conroy et al. (1982)	PA	70	70	A	24	X	X	X	X	++		+[1]
D'Amico et al. (1978)	WV	6	7	AC	6,12[2]	X	X	X	X	++[3] ++[4]	++ a,b,c,f o d,e	
Eastwood et al. (1988)	N.E. USA	49	49	A	60	X	X	X	X		++ a,c,d,e,f,g + b	
Horner et al. (1988)	OR	22	23	AC	60	X	X	X	X		++ a,c,f	+
Rosen (1985)	AR	58	58	A	24	X	X	X	X	++	++ a,d,e,f	
Schroeder et al. (1978)	NC	19	19	A	12			X		++	+ a,b,c	

[1]The movers stayed the same while the contrast group got worse.
[2]After measuring behavior at 6 months, 2 of the control subjects were randomly assigned to move to the community.
[3]Time 1 (4 exp., 9 cont.)
[4]Time 2 (6 exp., 7 cont.)

Outcomes
++ = statistically significant improvement relative to the contrast group
+ = improvement relative to the contrast group but not statistically significant
o = no change relative to the contrast group
- = decline relative to the contrast group but not statistically significant
-- = statistically significant decline relative to the contrast group

Adaptive Behavior Domains
a = self-care, domestic
b = communication/language
c = social skills
d = vocational
e = academic
f = community living
g = recreation/leisure

Age
A = adult
C = children
AC = adults and children

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Table 2
Longitudinal Studies
Behavioral Outcomes Associated with Movement from State Institutions to Small (15 or fewer persons) Community Living Arrangements

Author (date)	State	# Subjects	Age	Time (months)	Level of MR				BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES		
					Bord/ Mild	Mod	Sev	Prof	Adaptive Behavior General/ Overall	Adaptive Behavior Specific Domains	Problem Behavior
Bradley et al. (1986)	NH	93	AC	84	X	X	X	X	++	++ d	-
Colorado Div. of DD (1982)	CO	108	AC	12	X	X	X	X	+		
Conroy et al. (1985)	PA	383[1]	AC	72[1]	X	X	X	X	++		+
Conroy et al. (1988)	CT	207	A	24	X	X	X	X	++	++ d	--
Feinstein et al. (1986)	LA	158	AC	9	X	X	X	X	++		++
Horner et al. (1988)	OR	23	AC	60	X	X	X	X		++ a,c,f	+
Kleinburg et al. (1983)	NY	20	A	12		X	X	X		+ a[2],b,c - d,g	+[3] -[4]
O'Neil et al. (1985)	NY	27	A	9	X	X	X	X		o a,b[5]	
Thompson et al. (1980)	MN	5	A	24			X	X	+[6]	+ a,b,c,f,g[6]	
State of WI (1986)	WI	24	A	18	X	X	X	X		++ b,c,d,f + a,e	o

[1]This study included 6 groups, all of which showed significant gains, the largest group measured over the longest time is reported here
[2]Domestic activities increased significantly, but domestic behavior showed no overall change
[3]IQ above 20
[4]IQ below 20
[5]Significant increases were found in 4 of 16 subcategories in these skill areas
[6]Mean differences were not tested for statistical significance

Outcomes
++ = statistically significant improvement after move to the community
+ = improvement after move but not statistically significant
o = no change after move
- = decline after move but not statistically significant
-- = statistically significant decline after the move to the community

Adaptive Behavior Domains
a = self-care, domestic
b = communication/language
c = social skills
d = vocational
e = academic
f = community living
g = recreation/leisure

Age
A = adult
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